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For Immediate Release  
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January 31, 2002  
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## NETHERCUTT COMMENTS ON POTENTIAL AL QAEDA TARGETS IN WASHINGTON STATE

*Emphasizes Need to Remain Alert*

Rep. George R. Nethercutt, Jr. today commented on reports that U.S. troops recovered evidence in Afghanistan that indicated the Space Needle and Grand Coulee Dam may have been specifically targeted by al Qaeda operatives. Following the attacks on September 11, Rep. Nethercutt, a member of the Defense and Interior Subcommittees on Appropriations, anticipated the possibility of a threat to Eastern Washington and advised all public facilities in the area to conduct a threat assessment and prepare or update disaster plans if they had not already done so.

"While intelligence officials may not know of an imminent threat within our state, the evidence recovered in Afghanistan should not be taken lightly," said Rep. Nethercutt. "Considering the significance of the Space Needle and the crucial importance of Grand Coulee Dam to power needs throughout the West, we must remain vigilant, on alert and prepared for an attack."

With respect to the Grand Coulee Dam, Rep. Nethercutt last fall requested that security be upgraded in separate meetings with the Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), Pat Wood, the Administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Steve Wright, and with the Assistant Secretary of the Interior, David Bernhardt. Nethercutt also sent a list of questions concerning the potential vulnerability of Grand Coulee Dam to the Bureau of Reclamation.

Grand Coulee is the largest dam in the United States and the third largest in the world. The Park Service has upgraded its enforcement presence at the dam, but the appropriateness of Park Service law enforcement guarding the massive

facility has been questioned. Rep. Nethercutt stated, "It is important to note that the National Guard has been assigned to protect other dams in the United States. Our Northwest power resources, our ports and our landmarks must be properly protected." He concluded by stating that "The President has told the Nation that many terrorists still remain hidden in the United States. We must assume that they plan future attacks and remain alert."